



# National Child Care Information Center

*A service of the Child Care Bureau*

NCCIC

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## **FAMILY, FRIEND, and NEIGHBOR CHILD CARE: RESOURCES and ORGANIZATIONS**

Many children are now being cared for by family, friends, and neighbors in home settings. Family, friend, and neighbor care is also known as “kith and kin” care or “informal care,” as opposed to the care provided in more formal and professional center-based and family child care markets. The following is a sample of resources with information about family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care.

### **NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

#### ■ **Institute for a Child Care Continuum Bank Street College of Education**

610 West 112th Street  
New York, NY 10025-1898  
212-875-4400

World Wide Web: <http://www.bankstreet.edu/kithandkin/index.html>

The Institute for a Child Care Continuum at Bank Street College has been engaged in work with family, friends, and neighbors who provide child care for other people’s children. The National Kith and Kin Child Care Initiative aims to achieve acceptance of kith and kin child care as an integral part of the child care system. For additional information, contact Toni Porter at 212-961-3420 or e-mail [tporter@bnkst.edu](mailto:tporter@bnkst.edu).

- *The Use of Family, Friend and Neighbor Care: Findings from a Survey of State Policies* (January 2005), by Toni Porter and Shannon M. Kearns, presents data about State regulations, subsidy policies, and special initiatives for this population of child care providers. This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.bankstreet.edu/gems/ICCC/surveyspaperfinal.pdf>.
- *Frequently Asked Questions About Kith and Kin Child Care* (2004), by the Institute for a Child Care Continuum, summarizes research on family, friend, and neighbor care in a question and answer format. This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.bankstreet.edu/gems/ICCC/FinalFAQ.pdf>.
- *Policy Issues in License-Exempt Child Care: Lead Paint, Wages, and Criminal Record Checks* (May 2004), by Toni Porter and Sally Mabon, examines regulatory and policy issues for family, friend, and neighbor care with a series of case studies that illustrate each issue, a description of the policy context, and questions. This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.bankstreet.edu/gems/ICCC/kithandkinpolicyJune2.pdf>.

- *Doting on Kids: Understanding Quality in Kith and Kin Child Care* (December 2003), by Toni Porter, Rena Rice, and Sally Mabon, examines the quality of kith and kin child care using findings from focus group discussions with caregivers across the country about their understanding of the children in their care, their interactions with them, their relationships with parents, and their views on health and safety. Data indicate some positive aspects of quality in family, friend, and neighbor care.
- *Understanding License-Exempt Care in Connecticut: Report to the Connecticut Department of Social Services Initiative to Support Kith and Kin Care* (January 2002), by Toni Porter and Sulaifa Habeeb, describes the primary reason for the study is to learn more about kith and kin providers and to integrate their needs into the formal child care system.
- *Lessons Learned: Strategies for Working with Kith and Kin Caregivers* (June 2000), by Toni Porter and Rena Rice, provides strategies for successful recruitment and retention.
- *Neighborhood Child Care: Family, Friends and Neighbors Talk about Caring for Other People's Children* (July 1998), by Toni Porter, provides information on family, friend, and neighbor care, such as how these child care arrangements start; how the arrangements end; and the role that payment plays. This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.bankstreet.edu/kithandkin/neighborhood.pdf>.

■ **Child Care Aware**

1319 F Street NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20004  
800-424-2246

World Wide Web: <http://www.childcareaware.org/en/>

The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), through a cooperative agreement with the Child Care Bureau, receives funding to operate Child Care Aware—a national toll-free child care consumer telephone hotline and Website. The mission of Child Care Aware is to ensure that families have access to accurate, useful information about finding child care. Through Child Care Aware, families are linked to their local, community-based child care resource and referral programs and receive consumer education materials.

Child Care Aware resources on Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care include the following:

- *The Daily Parent* is a newsletter for working parents. The article “All in the Family: Using Relatives for Child Care” (Fall 1997) is available on the Web at <http://www.childcareaware.org/en/dailyparent/0497/>.

■ **Families and Work Institute (FWI)**

267 Fifth Avenue, Floor 2  
New York, NY 10016  
212-465-2044

World Wide Web: <http://www.familiesandwork.org/>

FWI is a nonprofit research and planning organization committed to developing new approaches toward balancing the changing needs of America's families with the continuing need for workplace productivity.

- FWI sponsored a conference call titled, “Promoting School Readiness: Community-Based Strategies to Improve Family, Friend and Neighbor Child Care” (December 6, 2001), that focused on resources that assist the families, friends, and neighbors who care for and teach the majority of our nation’s young children while their parents work.

■ **The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)**

The Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University  
215 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10027  
646-284-9600

World Wide Web: <http://www.nccp.org/>

The mission of NCCP is to identify and promote strategies that prevent young child poverty in the United States, and improve the lives of the millions of children under age 6 who are growing up poor. NCCP has published the following materials that relate to family, friend, and neighbor care:

- *Kith and Kin–Informal Child Care: Highlights from Recent Research* (May 2001) by Melanie Brown-Lyons, Anne Robertson, and Jean Layzer, analyzes 27 key studies of informal child care over the last 20 years. It summarizes what is known about informal child care: the proportion of children using it and trends over time; family characteristics; why it is used; the costs; who the providers are; quality issues; and the experiences of providers, parents and the children in care. The report includes abstracts of documents in the field, methodological issues, and additional resources. It states:
  - There has been relatively little change over more recent years in the pattern of child care usage.
  - There is significant variation across states in the types of child care used, both in subsidized and unsubsidized care, as well as different patterns in different communities within states.
  - The use of informal care is in part related to the educational level of parents, household income, employment status, work schedule, receipt of public assistance, household composition, number of children in the family, and ethnicity.
  - As education and income rise, parents are more likely to use regulated child care settings.
  - Parental values, view of quality child care, age of child, cost of care, and other constraints to obtaining other types of care influence decisions to seek informal care.
  - Informal care provided by relatives is the least expensive care available.
  - It appears that informal care providers have less education than other providers, extensive experience caring for children, and different motivations for providing care than their more formal counterparts.

- Some informal providers, particularly those who are relatives, do not want to be regulated, although others move on to become part of the regulated market. Kith and kin caregivers may seek contact with other caregivers and information, but they may not always perceive these needs as a need for “training,” nor may they desire to become professionals.
- Depending on the population studied and the measures used, informal care was sometimes rated to be lower in quality than other forms of care, particularly care provided in centers. Findings in this area, however, were not consistent across the studies reviewed.

This document is available on the Web at [http://www.nccp.org/pub\\_kkh01.html](http://www.nccp.org/pub_kkh01.html).

- *Child Care by Kith and Kin: Supporting Family, Friends, and Neighbors Caring for Children: Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief 5* (1998), by Ann Collins and Barbara Carlson, documents important strategies that individual States and communities are using to reach out directly to children and their caregivers. The overview identifies a number of new and emerging strategies to engage family, friend, and neighbor child care providers and the families they serve. These include:
  - Reaching out to kith and kin caregivers as part of State- or community-wide efforts to boost the quality of all forms of child care;
  - Using family support models to engage kith and kin caregivers and pay attention to cultural issues;
  - Using new messengers to reach out to kith and kin caregivers;
  - Using a center-based program as a hub of efforts directed at kith and kin caregivers;
  - Using the Child and Adult Care Food Program with license-exempt providers who are regulated as a result of receiving subsidies; and
  - Bringing resources to kith and kin caregivers.

This resource is available on the Web at [http://www.nccp.org/pub\\_cwr98e.html](http://www.nccp.org/pub_cwr98e.html).

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

■ *The Use of Relative Care While Parents Work: Findings from the 1999 National Survey of America’s Families* (November 2004), by Kathleen Snyder and Sarah Adelman, looks in depth at the use of relative care for children under 13 while their parents are at work—including who uses it, for how many hours, and how often it is relied on as the only child care arrangement versus one of a combination of arrangements. The paper also examines some characteristics of relative care settings, such as whether the care is provided in the child’s or relative’s home, whether the caregiver is above the age of 18, whether the child is cared for in a multi-child

setting, and whether the care is provided by a relative who lives with the child. This resource is available on the Web at [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311131\\_DP04-09.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311131_DP04-09.pdf).

■ *Threshold of Licensed Family Child Care* (August 2004), by Sarah LeMoine, NCCIC, under the Licensing Regulations topic in the Popular Topics section of the NCCIC Web site is available at <http://nccic.org/pubs/cclicensingreq/threshold.html> in HTML format and at <http://nccic.org/pubs/cclicensingreq/threshold.pdf> in PDF. This document includes information about the number of children in a family child care home when licensing is required.

■ *Welfare Reform, Work, and Child Care: The Role of Informal Care in the Lives of Low-Income Women and Children* (October 2003), by Virginia W. Knox, Andrew S. London, Ellen K. Scott, analyzes the role of informal care in the lives of low-income women and children using data from in-depth ethnographic interviews conducted in Cleveland, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia. This resource is available on the Web at <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/353/policybrief.pdf>.

■ *Sparking Connections: Community-Based Strategies for Helping Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregivers Meet the Needs of Employees, their Children and Employers* (January 2003), by Marta Lopez, Peg Sprague, Nina Sazer O'Donnell, and Deborah Stahl, presents an initiative to identify community-based strategies for helping family, friend, and neighbor caregivers meet the needs of working parents, their children, and employers. Initiative goals include: (1) expand the knowledge base about how to enhance the child care provided by family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, including roles that retailers and other employers can play; (2) design, demonstrate, and document strategies to support a productive workforce by connecting employees and their family, friend, and neighbor caregivers to useful community resources; and (3) share what is learned with employers, families, communities, funders, and policy-makers throughout the nation. Model initiatives are presented to illustrate some of the creative ways that community organizations and public and private partnerships are beginning to address the needs of family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. Appendices include: a list of potential partners for making connections in the community, a chart providing information on what community partners can do, and a list of contributing experts. For a copy of this report, contact the Families and Work Institute at 212-465-2044 or on the Web at <http://www.familiesandwork.org/publications/sparking.html>.

■ *Non-Licensed Forms of Child Care in Homes: Issues and Recommendations for State Support* (June 2001), by Gwen Morgan, Kim Elliot, Christine Beandette, Sheri Azer and Sarah LeMoine, published by the Wheelock College Institute for Leadership and Career Development, describes the six different forms of unlicensed care that are included under the term informal care, State licensing regulations and exemptions, how States' policies for family child care result in defining what is not licensed, the different forms of care in homes that are not regulated by licensing, ways that States can support each form of care, and recommendations for needed policy reforms. The report states:

Many early care and education researchers and policy-makers divide family child care into two categories: licensed, formal family child care and unlicensed, informal care. In reality, there is no such thing as informal family child care. Instead, six very different forms of unlicensed care are lumped together under the term informal care:

1. Relative (or “Kin”) care
2. Kith care
3. Care by friends
4. Care by neighbors
5. In-home care
6. Family child care homes that are licensed in some States but are unlicensed in other states due to variations in states’ threshold definitions of family child care.

Grouping these kinds of care together under one name clouds the unique nature and demands of each form and undermines quality care. As we discuss quality initiatives, licensing issues, and monitoring, the distinctions between these forms of care are important. The appropriate monitoring system, and successful strategies to support quality for children in care, will be different for each form of care. (page 1)

“Chart 1.1 Threshold of Licensed Family Child Care–November 2000” specifies the number of children that a person cares for in order to be considered a family child care provider in different States.

This resource is available on the Web at <http://nccic.org/pubs/nonlic-wheelock.html>.

■ “*Children Cared for by Relatives: Who Are They and How Are They Faring?*” (February 2001), by Jennifer Ehrle, Rob Geen, and Rebecca L. Clark, Urban Institute, based on data from the 1997 National Survey of America’s Families, is available on the Web at <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310270>.

■ “Infants and Toddlers in Kith and Kin Care: Findings from the Informal Care Project” in *ZERO TO THREE* (June/July 1999), by Toni Porter, published by ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, reports the following support initiatives:

There is a common assumption that many informal caregivers would resist efforts to provide assistance in taking care of children because they have years of experience raising their own. The women in our focus group did not bear this out. They wanted more information about a long list of topics. They wanted to learn about what to expect from children at different ages, how to keep children healthy and safe, nutrition, discipline, activities to do with children, and how to deal with parents, the same topics that form the core of preparing professionals to work with young children. Many of the Mexican American caregivers also wanted information on how to deal with child abuse, sexual abuse, and drugs. Some women asked about information on licensed family child care or careers in early childhood education. (page 33)

When asked how they wanted to obtain the information, “meetings like this one” was the most common answer. They wanted an opportunity to discuss common problems and learn from each other. Written materials were regarded as useful for references, but not particularly helpful because newsletters or tip sheets were



often mislaid or lost. The women expressed even less interest in videotapes or audiotapes because they thought that they would not have time to watch or listen to them while they were caring for children. (page 33)

Kith and kin caregivers who have little interest in a career in child care may be responsive to strategies that have been developed in family support and parent education. A small number of programs across the country are currently using support groups or home visits to engage caregivers with the objective of improving the quality of care they offer. Other programs are aggressively reaching out to kith and kin caregivers to offer them training as family child care providers or early childhood teachers. Another strategy that draws from both of these approaches may be the creation of community-based resource centers that provide services for anyone who cares for children—parents, kith and kin, or child care professionals. (page 34)

For additional information, contact Toni Porter at Bank Street College at 212-961-3420 or e-mail [tporter@bnkst.edu](mailto:tporter@bnkst.edu).

■ *The Study of Children in Family Child Care and Relative Care: Highlights of Findings* (1994), by Ellen Galinsky, Carollee Howes, and Susan Kontos, is one of the only national studies that examines quality in family child care homes and relative care settings. This study focused on families and providers in the communities of San Fernando/Los Angeles, California; Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; and Charlotte, North Carolina. The study found that care in the home of a provider is offered by three distinct groups: (1) regulated family child care providers; (2) non-regulated family child care providers; and (3) non-regulated relatives who provide care. Parents and providers agree about what is most essential: child safety, provider and parent communication about the child in care, and a warm, attentive relationship between the provider and child.

In addition, the book, *Quality in Family Child Care and Relative Care* (1995), by Susan Kontos, Carollee Howes, Marybeth Shinn, and Ellen Galinsky, published by Teacher's College Press, provides an in-depth academic presentation and analysis of the findings from *The Study of Children in Family Child Care and Relative Care*, and chronicles the carefully designed study from the perspective of families, children, and providers. It examines relationships among quality and regulation, family incomes, costs, provider turnover, mothers' satisfaction, and children's development.

Both of these resources are available from the Families and Work Institute at 212-466-2044 or on the Web at <http://www.familiesandwork.org/>.

The National Child Care Information Center does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.

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